



Employee News

Governor M. Jodi Rell

Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara

Volume I, Issue 46

May 25, 2006

EAP

Employee Assistance Program

1-800-526-3485

24 / 7 Assistance

www.solutions-eap.com

DMR

www.ct.gov/dmr

Central Office

(860) 418-6000

North Region

(860) 263-2500

West Region

(203) 805-7400

South Region

(203) 294-5049

STS

(203) 586-2000

"Ask the Commissioner"

If you have a question for Commissioner O'Meara, you are invited to e-mail Joan Barnish at joan.barnish@po.state.ct.us. Watch for your response in future newsletter editions.

Newsworthy articles should be forwarded to your regional **DMR Employee News** contacts:

North/Linda Schaefer

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Two DMR Staff Honored With Governor's Service Award



At Governor's Service Award Ceremony, left to right: North Regional Administrator John Houchin; Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara; recipient Ann Tetrault, Education Liaison for North Region; Governor M. Jodi Rell; Fritz Gorst, Director, Southbury Training School; and recipient Peter Jackson, MRW-1, Southbury Training School.

Two longtime department staff members were honored by Governor M. Jodi Rell with Governor's Service Awards at a ceremony at the Capitol on April 21.

Peter Jackson, a MRW-1 at Southbury Training School (STS), and Ann Tetreault, North Region Education Liaison, received the awards.

Mr. Jackson was nominated by several colleagues at the Southbury Training School for his active and respectful advocacy on behalf of the residents of the school that he serves. In particular, Mr. Jackson is known for working hard to enhance the quality of life of the residents.

"For the past few years, Mr. Jackson has organized a vacation to Lake George for the residents he works with," according to George Skidd, who wrote the nomination. "This kind of trip involves a great deal of planning and organization. Mr. Jackson begins his planning process a full year in advance, often on his own time, with attention to detail that has consistently ensured safe and optimal enjoyment for all."

In addition, Mr. Jackson works to ensure that residents' summer vacations at Camp Harkness in Waterford are filled with activities ranging from deep sea fishing to museum visits and theatrical performances.

"Mr. Jackson truly stands out to the individuals he serves as well as to the colleagues who nominated him," said Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara, who attended the ceremony. "Through his own self-confidence and dedication, he serves as a role model and helps to create positive experiences and memories for the men he supports."

Continued on next page

Case Manager by day...Stand-up Comedienne by night

By day, Carmela Smith of Ivoryton is a case manager in the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) Newington Office. By night, at least on some nights, she goes by her maiden name of Carmela Fusciello and takes the stage as a stand-up comic.

Ms. Smith grew up watching Johnny Carson and David Letterman, and in high school for her Senior talent show she performed the classic Bob Newhart "driving instructor" sketch. The response she got kept her interest. While a college student, she turned a ticket to the David Letterman show

Continued on next page

DMR Staffer is Comedienne *continued from page 1*



Case Manager Carmela Smith (right) goes over a file with South Region colleague Case Manager Sharon Macken.

into an opportunity to actually meet Letterman and be brought on stage.

"I put my shoes in my backpack and told people they'd been stolen," she recalls, thinking it would get her some attention. When Letterman came out to warm up the crowd before the show, he heard her tale, then during his opening monologue he asked, "Who needs shoes?" and brought her up onstage and right into the guest chair. "I'm embarrassed I lied," she said, "But I was so excited to be part of the show, I'm a big fan." She ended up with two new pair of shoes that evening, courtesy of Letterman.

When she began working for DMR in 1999, she did her first stand-up show. "I was too nervous at the beginning, but friends encouraged me to perform at a local 'open mic' night and it went over well," Ms. Smith said, so she kept at it, but not regularly. She continued to perform in CT and at Stand-Up New York as well as other NY clubs. She also has written material for other comedians.

She met her husband through her job at DMR. Robert Smith and Carmela were both Case Management Supervisors in the North Region in 2002. After a year of dating, Carmela and Robert married in 2003. She moved to Ivoryton to join Robert and his three teenage sons, Ryan, Travis & Jake. They soon added a daughter to their family, Natalie. While in Ivoryton, the next level of her comedy career began to take off. She began emailing the executive director of the Ivoryton Playhouse, telling her it would be a great place for comedy. She ended up producing and performing in a standup show as a fundraiser for the playhouse. Interest grew. "I got a call from a parents group to do a fundraiser for a 'Safe Grad' party and we did that at the Ivoryton Playhouse too," she said. Her oldest stepson was a senior at Valley High School at that time and she loved the idea of using her talents to benefit a safe graduation party.

This season, she produced a series of four comedy shows at the Playhouse called "Carmela's Comedy Night." She doesn't always appear in the shows, but enjoys bringing in talent from near and far to entertain. She will be producing four more shows for their next season.

Ms. Smith, a native of Southington, grew up the middle child of parents who immigrated from Italy. Her family roots and culture are a source of the humor she shares with audiences at the Ivoryton Playhouse and other venues. "I like to make jokes about my family. As soon as people hear my parents are Italian immigrants they ask if they're in the Mafia and I tell them 'yes' and go from there."

"My act and the shows I produce are clean, you don't need to be vulgar to be funny," she says. Look for this creative lady on comedy stages in the future.

Governor's Service Awards *continued from page 1*

Ms. Tetreault co-facilitates a bereavement support group for adults with developmental disabilities. The group was established because beyond well-meaning family and friends, there was no organized bereavement program. Several individuals with developmental disabilities who had experienced the loss of a loved one needed support to cope with their grief.

Amanda Welch, who works at a group home and nominated Ms. Tetreault for the award, spoke of Ms. Tetreault's sensitivity to the needs of those who are grieving in her nomination. In particular, when a popular employee of the group home passed away, it was a sad time for staff and consumers both. Ms. Tetreault organized a memorial service that was helpful and supportive for all. "The way the memorial was handled is to be commended," Ms. Welch wrote. "It was especially nice to listen to our consumers speak about their loss, how much they loved and missed and will never forget their colleague."

Commissioner O'Meara praised Ms. Tetreault as well. "Ann has provided a much needed service with sensitivity and compassion to all she works with," he said. "She is extremely deserving of this award."

After the award ceremony, recipients and their family members posed for photographs with the Governor.